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APRIL 17, 2026 | VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 9

YOUR PURCHASE BENEFITS THE VENDORS.
PLEASE BUY ONLY FROM BADGED VENDORS.

Does the Michigan 10-cent bottle deposit law need changing? **page 7**

VENDOR NO. 485

MEET YOUR VENDOR: DENISE SHEARER

GROUNDCOVER 15

15 YEARS OF NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Pinball Pete's comes to the heart of Ann Arbor. page 8

Pinball Pete's joins the Michigan and State Theater in Liberty Street's iconic signage.
Photo by Mike Jones.

THIS PAPER WAS BOUGHT FROM venmo

@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

PROVIDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-DETERMINED INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY POVERTY,
PRODUCING A STREET NEWSPAPER THAT GIVES A PLATFORM TO UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES IN WASHTENAW COUNTY,
PROMOTING AN ACTION TO BUILD A JUST, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of our regular editions of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for $2, keeping all income and tips from each sale. Vendors are the main contributors to the paper, and are compensated to write and report.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. Our paper is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers.

International Network of Street Papers

NOW HIRING: GROUNDCOVER NEWS VENDORS!

Why?

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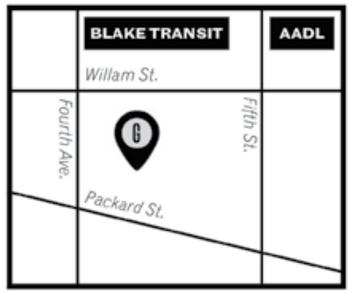
Groundcover New Vendor Orientations are EVERY Tuesday and Thursday at 10am at the Groundcover Office.

Trainings take 90 minutes. New vendors receive 10 free papers and a badge to start.



The Groundcover office is located in the basement of Bethlehem United Church of Christ (423 S 4th Ave, downtown Ann Arbor)

We are hosting an Ypsi New Vendor Orientation on Wednesday, April 22, 11 a.m. at the Ypsilanti District Library (Michigan Ave branch - Room 2 in the basement)!

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3. **Volunteer** — You'll learn a lot about our vendors, the newspaper and your community. Interested in volunteering regularly? Fill out the form on our website.
4. **Advertise** your company, organization, event or resource — see rates below.
5. **Follow us on Facebook and Instagram** — promote our posts and share your favorite articles and vendor interactions.
6. **Donate items** — A seasonally appropiate list of items most needed at our office and on the street is available on our website. Drop off anytime we're open.

GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES for one month

Size	Black/White	Color	Dimensions (W x H in inches)
1/8	$110.00	$150.00	5 X 3 or 2.5 X 6.5
1/6	$145.00	$200.00	5 X 4
1/4	$200.00	$265.00	5 X 6.25
1/2	$375.00	$500.00	5 X 13 or 10.25 X 6.5
full page	$660.00	$900.00	10.25 X 13

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Three Months/Six Issues: **15%** off
Six Months/Twelve Issues: **25%** off
Full Year/Twenty six Issues: **35%** off
Only run for two weeks/one issue: **40%** off
Additional **20%** discount for money saving coupons

MEET YOUR VENDOR

Denise Shearer, vendor No. 485

In one sentence, who are you? I love to make friends.

Where do you usually sell Groundcover? On Liberty by the art gallery.

When and why did you start selling Groundcover? I wanted to make friends and support myself, too.

What is your favorite spot in Ann Arbor? The library and the Farmers Market.

What words do you live by? Treat others like you'd like to be treated.

What motivates you to work hard selling Groundcover News? Supporting myself and making friends is important.

If you could do anything for a day, what would it be? Go to Frankenmuth.

If you had to eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be? Hot dogs and chicken noodle soup.

What's the most interesting thing that happened to you while selling Groundcover News? I met some real nice people.

What was your first job? I was a shampoo lady in a beauty shop.

Truth or Lies Mystery Lane: Time Travellers, LLC (part 2)

FELICIA WILBERT
Groundcover vendor No. 234

Read part one in the March 6, 2026 edition of Groundcover News.

The voices got louder, and louder! "Get out, return our property to our children!"

The cook and staff used to hear Tom shouting at no one: "It's mine, leave me alone!" Tom knew he had wronged the rightful owners; however, he did not care. He had a bold, menacing and controlling personality. Tom often bullied everyone in his path. He was the richest man in the county of Falconer, which was named after him. Murder and corruption were his way of life. He thought money could buy anyone and everyone.

The twins, Lila and Delia, were two ladies who had fallen in love with the wrong men in his eyes. He detested the idea of two black men married to the ladies. The ladies were smart, owning the largest plantation other than the Falconer Estate. The Handover Estate owned one hundred and sixty slaves. Lila and Delia struck a bargain with their slaves, drafting freedom papers for everyone upon their death. They dug a hidden safety underground passage out in the fields, and one near the house where they hid the documents. The slaves' job was to get their children and husbands to safety. Their plan was to sell the property and move to New York where they could be free. When they listed the property for sale, Tom realized they were moving away with the black men. He could not allow this!

Armond, the Pinkerton man investigating what happened, talked with the cook and an older woman named Sady. She spoke with a raspy, soft voice and explained what happened. Sady stated it was a Sunday afternoon about 4 p.m. just before dinner was to be served. "Mr. Falconer and his henchman arrived at the plantation. Everyone started fighting, distracting the men and blocking them from the family. Those dirty men started killing everyone in sight. Only us and 26 people survived, hidden in the passage. They marched those girls right over to that old oak tree."

Sady was pointing at one of the three large trees. "Mr. Falconer kept asking where the men and the children were. Lila and Delia kept quiet, only saying goodbye to each other. Within three days they had shoved everyone's body in a big pit, even the owners." Sady pointed over near the oak trees. "This land has not been peaceful ever since that day. You can hear the girls crying and hollering, 'Return the land to our children!' They say that the spirit of the ladies marched Mr. Falconer right over to that tree."

"Can I give you something Mister?" said Sady. She led Armond and Randal, the man from the Deeds Office, over to the field and instructed them to lift up the false door. It was covered with so much dirt, you would never know it was there. They ducked down into the passage. They lit a makeshift torch and looked around. Randal found an old wooden box. It was a fancy sewing box. Once outside, they opened the box. It contained freedom papers and birth records for the children of the ladies, and a book of births and deaths of slaves.

Armond knew what had to be done. He said, "Come, Randal, we must return to your office immediately." Once they arrived at the clerk's office, Armond searched the records, finding the name of the twins' father who had given the land to his daughters. He read the book of births, finding the names of the husbands and children of Lila and Delia. Armond looked at Randal and said, "I know you are an honest man who only wants to do the proper solution. Are you ready and willing to rewrite history, my man?"

Randal was scared and nervous, only wanting this to be over.

After hearing what really happened at the Estate just over a month ago, Armond said, "Now draft up a deed with these names on it." He handed Randal a note with John Jr., Tom Jr., Stella and Cindy Hitchens. "They are the rightful owners, do you agree?" Mr. Randal was shaking; however, he managed to get the names correct. He said, "What about the signing of the deed tomorrow?"

"Oh, don't worry, it will not happen, for you have corrected history! Be proud and stay honest, or I will come for you." Armond left, walking from the office. When he reached the train station, he turned his hat backwards.

The deed had been transferred to its rightful owners. The next morning, Mrs. Carwell [read part one] returned. She was elated, saying "Thanks, there is no record of me and my family owning the property. I don't know what you did, however, please accept this." She passed Armond an envelope. He opened it. It was a title to a 2030 Yacht and a picture. "Hold it, I can't take this." Armond tried handing her the title. "Oh yes, you can Sonny. I am 88 and have no one to give it to. Please let this be your payment, and thanks for correcting everything. Now I can leave here in peace."

Life is a dance!

BYRON FLOWERS
Groundcover contributor

I would like to start off by giving an honor to GOD, who makes all things possible.

My topic is dance. It started with me as a kid break dancing, then dancing at parties doing other dances. It's therapeutic for the soul, it helps the brain, it helps with posture. It's good to dance when you feel not-so-good, or when you feel good. It releases endorphins in the body. They feel good; endorphins help with stress.

I am 51 years of age and I step-dance on the streets of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. I have a nerve problem, but my love for dance pushes me to step til my dying day! It puts smiles on people's faces, it motivates the youth. Enjoy life right now, God got you. Leave your worries behind.

My name is Byron Flowers. I grew up in a Baptist church in Muskegon, Mich., New Hope Baptist Church. I learned that the stuff you learned as a kid can bring you joy as an adult.

Ann Arbor woman in midst of Iran war calls on City Council to pass a resolution

MIKE JONES
Groundcover vendor No. 113

It has been seven weeks since the start of the United States, Israel and Iran war.

Dr. Mozhgan Savabieasfahani, an environmental toxicologist from Ann Arbor who ran for City Council in 2020, became trapped in Tehran, Iran in early March 2026, while caring for her elderly parents during intensified military conflicts.

She was experiencing the conflict firsthand. Surrounded by aerial bombings near her childhood home, she reported on the situation on March 5, in a Youtube video calling for an end to the U.S. and Israeli strikes.

Known for her advocacy for cutting local ties to Israel, she has spoken out against the genocide in Palestine regularly at Ann Arbor City Council Meetings. Her husband, Blaine Coleman, remained in Ann Arbor and reported her situation to local media, advocating for her safety. She and her parents were staying as safe as possible under difficult conditions as of early March 2026.

Mr. Coleman addressed Ann Arbor City Council on March 16, 2026, where he gave an update on his wife's status, and he played video on his laptop of his wife's recorded video message from Tehran calling on City Council to pass a symbolic resolution asking governments to cut off military aid to Israel. At the April 2, 2026 Ann Arbor City Council meeting, Mr. Coleman stated Dr. Savabieasfahani and her parents were still under heavy bombardment, and he continued to ask Council to pass a resolution to end military aid to Israel.

Savabieasfahani said if people of the United States want Iranians to have a better life, they should stop their own government from bombing and putting sanctions on Iran.

"Bombing a society like Iran is not going to force them into submission. This is an ancient culture," she said. "This is an old, ancient people who will not submit to the force of the United States and Israel. We have dignity and we will not submit to you."

Dr. Mozhgan Savabieasfahani

Israel has done similar damage to other places, from Palestine to Syria, Savabieasfahani said.

"And we must stop them," she said. "American taxpayers pay for Israeli genocide in Palestine. They are paying for Israel to massacre Iranian people in their country, attacking them. And this is unbearable. We must stop the U.S. and Israel from attacking everywhere, trying to force people to submit to their rule," reported Mlive.

The conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran began on February 28, 2026, following failed negotiations that led to U.S. and Israeli attacks. This followed a previous 12-day conflict in June 2025, and lingering high tensions from the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War.

EL CENTRAL Hispanic News independent community journalism, 37 years and counting!

ANNA GERSH
Groundcover Board President

I had the pleasure of visiting a kindred collective this past month. At 37 years young, EL CENTRAL Hispanic News is Detroit's oldest continuously operating bilingual news resource. I recently met managing editor Robert Dewaelsche to discuss the importance of local print journalism and to learn about all the amazing ways EL CENTRAL serves its community.

One of the most valuable features of EL CENTRAL is its office location. Situated right on Vernor Highway, across from the beautiful and spacious Clark Park, and around the corner from Western International High School, EL CENTRAL is perfectly placed to observe the community and — in the spirit of local journalism — ready and able to provide feedback and an accessible community platform to residents. We met at Armando's restaurant. If you've ever been to Mexicantown, it's likely someone has suggested you hit Armando's. Since 1967 Armando's has been serving up some of the most delicious Mexican food in the area. As we sat and talked and ate, we were joined intermittently by friends and fans alike — it seems everyone appreciates the critical importance of EL CENTRAL.

Though Mr. Dewaelsche was clearly a valued community member, he and his wife, southwest Detroit native Eva Garza Dewaelsche, only took over the paper in April 2022. Before that, it had been operating under founder-publisher Delores Sanchez since it was established. Ms. Sanchez, founder of Sanchez Media, created EL CENTRAL in 1988 to "provide complete media services to and for Hispanics in Michigan."

Since its founding, EL CENTRAL has won over 50 national awards and Ms. Sanchez was the first Latina to serve on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Hispanic Publications. She still supports the paper as Director of Advertising and Sales.

Mr. Dewaelsche and I discussed many things over our long and enlightening lunch, including the possibility of an EL CENTRAL-Groundcover News collab!! Stay tuned for that.

One thing about being at the center of things, as EL CENTRAL is, is that when things happen, you're right there, ready to capture truth and offer it back to the people for their consideration. As we wrapped up lunch, we walked out to find that nearly all of the students at Western High School had walked out, with their principal's permission, to stand against the very personal experience, for this small and closely knit community, of dealing with ICE on a daily basis.

We briefly spoke with Dr. Angel Garcia III, principal at Western, about the protest. He had the air of a man not exactly sure he was doing the smartest thing but buoyed by the confidence that he was definitely doing the right thing:

Garcia: It's great to meet you! This is a bold decision! How's it going out here today?

Gersh: It's great. I'm not going to say I'm completely relaxed. Every kid is out here and there are a few conflicts I'm concerned about, but look — you see what's happening. These actions have galvanized the community. Most people out here have been affected, it's your family, it's your friends.

At that point a concerned mother approached him, interrupting the interview, and asked after her daughter. It's an unusual way to end a school day and Dr. Garcia isn't the only one trying to figure out the best way to think about the situation.

On my way back to the car I met a group of three young ladies who were eager to share their thoughts. Elainai C.A. (11th grade); Ava L. (11th grade); and Layla A. (11th grade), all Western High students:

Gersh: What made you come out to the protest today?

Layla: This is a pretty big thing for our school. A couple of kids have actually gotten taken by ICE. I've had friends who were taken. It had a big mental effect on them. And it hurts seeing that, like, as a friend, and I don't

see **EL CENTRAL** page 6 ➡

A2 proposes dismantling emergency sirens despite increasing threats

JAY COOPER
Groundcover contributor

Author's note: The City of Ann Arbor announced April 15, following a tornado and severe thunderstorm warning, that it decided to retain and invest in its outdoor warning siren system. "We're grateful for the thoughtful input shared by thousands of community members about the sirens and the city's other emergency warning tools."

Ann Arbor is considering replacing their outdoor sirens with beeping buzzing phones. This is in line with what I've come to expect from Ann Arbor policies — sleek, modern and completely devoid of empathy for the most vulnerable. Also, as is to be expected from Ann Arbor governance, it's a lie. The phone alerts already exist — they inexplicably want to get rid of the vitally redundant sirens.

The three core principles listed for dismantling the sirens are: public safety effectiveness, clarity and comprehension, and responsible use of public funds. All three are absurd. Sirens are effective. They're loud and when people hear them they know something is amiss and to seek more information. Sirens are clear signs that (unless it's the predetermined testing day and time) there is something wrong. Sirens are an extremely responsible use of public funds. I cannot explain this penny-pinching at the expense of the most vulnerable, except that maybe some billionaire doesn't like the sound once a month. Below the principles, on the website [https://engage.a2gov.org/siren-review] it states: "Decommissioning sirens does not mean reducing emergency warning capability." All evidence points to the contrary.

In regards to cost, they say the sirens will cost $60,000 each of the next three years to repair, and $17,000 annually to maintain. To claim this as a problem is disgusting. The fact they tried means they think you're too stupid to look at how rich the city is. Sirens save lives, and this cost is pennies to the budget for a city like Ann Arbor, harvesting property taxes from billionaires. The projected increase in City revenue from property taxes for fiscal year 2027 is 4.58% or $2.8 million, the projected state shared revenue increase is 1% or $100,000, and the projected parking revenue increase is 6.8% or $253,000. Ann Arbor made $1.2 million taxing marijuana alone in fiscal year 2026, according to a presentation made by Marti Praschan at the March 23, 2026 FY27 Budget Working Session.

In the face of serious concerns such as the deaths caused by lack of sirens in Texas' flood alley (see www.npr.org/2025/07/11/nx-s1-5460863/flood-sirens-texas-warning) and in the Palisades fire (see file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/207915.pdf), posing risks to people without cell phones, including homeless and elderly folk, Emergency Manager Sydney Parmenter responded with a firehose of damage control. Concerns were met with unscientific nonsense, the runaround, and lies you can evaluate yourself by visiting engage.a2gov.org/siren-review.

(Emergency Manager is a title which sends chills up this Michigander's spine, though in this case she appears to be an emergency response coordinator, not a tinpot dictator that takes undemocratic control over Black towns. You can see how the grotesque euphemisms white supremacist systems use to steal your civil rights muddy the waters of communication and clarity.)

Parmenter cannot honestly respond to interrogations of this proposal in good faith because the proposal doesn't hold water. In LA County's Palisades fire postmortem, it states the obvious: "While redundancies in communication mechanisms exist in the county, they still rely on effective cellular coverage and do not work when there is poor cellular coverage or when commercial power is lost to an area. Cellular coverage is weakened when there are fewer cell towers in an area, while signal quality suffers when its use exceeds available capacity or when heavy smoke from a fire interferes, reflects or absorbs radio signals."

In other words, we need redundancy beyond the cellular. Power outages, technical difficulties, fires, cyberattacks and even the uptick in cell phone usage during an emergency can prevent people from getting the alerts on their phones, but Parmenter will hear none of it. She suggests you carry your cellphone on the river. She simply does not know how many elderly residents don't use cell phones. For any question of redundancy, Parmenter points to the Ann Arbor emergency alerts page (www.a2gov.org/alerts) which lists four channels of emergency alerts: A2 Emergency Alerts, which are signal-dependent via phone, email or text; Outdoor Warning Sirens, which they want to dismantle; Weather and Public Radio, which is partially signal-dependent as some people can only listen to these stations via Wi-Fi or cellular signal; and Wireless Emergency Alerts, which are entirely signal-dependent.

Parmenter's non-answers parading as answers ring hollow and circuitous as she attempts to cite sensible emergency response wisdom that runs counter to her intentions. When asked about cell outages she responds, "It is best practice to utilize multiple tools to ensure emergency communications are issued and accessible." Did she forget the context in which this discussion is happening? The topic on the table is dismantling one of the multiple tools we use to ensure emergency communications are issued and accessible! She did not forget — she is redirecting, she is distracting.

Another weird assertion that Parmenter makes is that sirens can't be heard inside. For decades when I had a home in Ann Arbor, I could hear the sirens. I'd say to myself: "Is it test Tuesday or should I be worried?" and I'd check the calendar to make sure I didn't need to duck and cover. Others, such as Groundcover associates Cynthia and Sim, attest that sirens sound very loudly inside their houses. So not only is it complete nonsense that you can't hear the sirens when you're inside, it also completely ignores the safety of people who aren't inside. If Ann Arbor were a humane place that sheltered its residents, maybe it would make sense to only consider those indoors, but Ann Arbor slumlords ratchet up rents, kick people out to get better rates on AirBnB, and tear down homes to build more expensive structures meant for the wealthy and their children.

While we absolutely should (and already do) have cellular alerts explaining the nature of disasters, they are not a replacement for sirens. Just because something is old does not mean it is bad. Sirens are not affected by cellular outages, they are not disrupted by the uptick in cellular usage during an emergency as everyone tries to contact loved ones, and they are not nearly as susceptible to cyberattacks or technical failure. They work. They've worked for over a century, and the evidence says if we dismantle them, people will die.

What's Happening at the Ann Arbor District Library

Open 10am–8pm Daily
Visit any of our five locations across town to browse books, magazines, newspapers, and more. Check out movies, CDs, art prints, musical instruments, or even home tools—you name it! Enjoy fast and free WiFi, study and meeting rooms, and plenty of comfortable spaces to relax or hang out.

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AADL founded Fifth Ave Press in 2017 to support the local writing community and promote the creation of original content. The imprint publishes works by authors who live in Washtenaw County. Consider submitting your finished manuscript to Fifth Avenue Press today at fifthave.aadl.org.

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FEATURED EVENT

Saturday, May 16 • 12–3:30 PM • Downtown Library
Create characters, go on guided interactive adventures, and forge your own stories at this celebration of tabletop Role-Playing Games! Try your hand at games and give miniature figure painting a go! Learn more at aadl.org/rpgday.

Finding opportunities for the unhoused

RACHAEL LANIER
Groundcover vendor No. 695

I had only been in the Ann Arbor area for maybe a week and a half as of March 5, 2026. I have been unhoused several times in my life and none of those episodes were times I could have controlled. I have found that this area is more open-minded about people in my situation. When I asked the local volunteers about employment opportunities in the area, I was immediately referred to Groundcover News which is the only truly independent newspaper here in Ann Arbor.

I quickly signed up to take their orientation and have been welcomed in with open arms. At the orientation meeting, the Director, Lindsay, invited me to the SHE TEAM women's group meeting that would occur in just a few short hours. I fell in love with the energy of this team instantly. The other members were so welcoming, and just taking that opportunity to brainstorm on different subjects to further not only ourselves, but also Groundcover, seemed so refreshing. I wondered to myself if there were any other organizations that would be just as inviting to people like me.

I started a small project and it's still ongoing so the results will either improve or decline depending on the participation of other people. It's local to Ann Arbor only so if this is successful or if it yields the results I'm looking for, I would like to expand this project to Ypsilanti and Brighton. It basically starts with a request via a letter to interview leaders of different businesses to see if hiring unhoused persons is something they would consider. I have a form already created with different questions such as: What are their hiring practices? What would be the barriers that might prevent the unhoused from being hired? Would these persons need to have any special training or certifications?

Ideally, I want to create a list of companies that could provide a safe space and opportunity for employment as well as growth to unhoused persons.

Groundcover does a wonderful job providing entrepreneurial opportunities for those trying to get back on their feet. As many times as I have been unhoused, throughout my travels across different states, 10 in the last five years looking for work, there are stigmas and stereotypes that present roadblocks and closed doors for people in my situation.

I got here because, back when I lived in Fargo, I mailed a money order for a processing fee separately from my USDA loan application to the Arkansas USDA office. The fee never made it to the office in Arkansas, so my application could not be processed. The result was instant homelessness. My daughters, our pets and I all lived in my 2008 white Chevy Suburban and shelters for around three months before being offered the most disgusting housing available in Malvern, Arkansas. Three months and I had to leave because the conditions were so uninhabitable, my daughters were getting sick.

I took them back to their father in Alabama, and I DoorDashed my way in a highjacked U-Haul to Wisconsin. I am homeless again, but my daughters are safe. Arkansas proved to be the worst decision of my life. My final service animal was rehomed in Cicero, Illinois. I finally made it to Detroit — where my original plan after losing everything was to claim asylum in Canada. I tried to claim asylum but it didn't work. I was immediately commanded to leave federal property. They weren't letting me over that border.

So, I tried to tough it out in Detroit. After eight months and two evictions, no jobs, entirely too much free labor just to have a roof over my head and a few events of being exploited, I left for Ann Arbor via the Dearborn Police department. I don't know how Ann Arbor feels about it, having another PD drop off homeless people in their city, but those guys were so nice to me — someone who has been stigmatized for anything and everything awful; from drug addict to alcoholic to sex worker. Wouldn't you know it, I was originally transported to Ann Arbor to their Greyhound bus station to buy a ticket out of state and I was $10 short. So, I'm now here for a little while longer.

I suppose I'm trying to tell you that discrimination against the unhoused has been so strong in my life for the last three years that I was expecting Ann Arbor to be the same as Fargo, North Dakota; Fort Smith, Arkansas; Malvern, Arkansas; Little Rock, Arkansas; Fayetteville, Arkansas; Racine, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; and Moorhead, Minnesota. With a few exceptions in Cicero Illinois, the organizations in most if not all other of those places refuse to help you. Their promises of housing, employment, resources, access to any services, were all just whispered lies on honeyed lips, to say the least. Or however that saying goes. Those organizations "manage" homeless populations, they don't solve the problem of homelessness or provide solutions. My point is: they lied.

In these other places, any attempt I made to become self-sufficient was immediately resisted. I was blocked from everything I tried. A case worker in Minnesota threatened to take my children from me if I went to work. Why? The goal was to become self-sufficient so I could afford my own housing and not be in their shelters. And for whatever reason, probably because I was homeless, none of the companies I applied to after leaving that shelter were hiring. I have an Associates of Science degree, over 25 years experience in customer service, 20 years in food and beverage, 10 years in manufacturing, 10 years in inventory and quality control, and 8 years in care giving, in overlapping jobs. I don't understand how I could be denied employment for three years straight. I got interviews — loads of interviews, and it seemed like it all went well. But apparently it didn't and I was the only one who couldn't see it.

I'm fairly confident in Ann Arbor there are organizations like Groundcover, who want to help those who are unhoused and who want to help themselves. I just have to compile a list and disseminate it to those who are interested.

This is also a big thank you to Groundcover for stopping that infamous gap in employment that seems to strike fear into the heart of every potential employer when they encounter us. The chance that we are given, this particular group with these particular sets of hardships, is indeed a godsend.

I would like to see if there are any other companies out there that can be a godsend to us as well. If not, Groundcover has us covered. No harm, no foul. Declinations are also considered. We aren't forcing anyone or trying to guilt trip or shame anyone, no blasting in the paper or anything petty like that. I am just looking for other options for any of us unhoused people who really just wanna get back on our feet and get our lives on track.

If there are any business owners interested in helping the unhoused, please email either me r2.lanier@gmail.com or you can email Lindsay Calka at contact@groundcovernews.com, and ask for a copy of the letter and the questionnaire. An email containing a Word document will be emailed to your email address. You can schedule a meeting or answer the questionnaire electronically. In the meantime, I will be visiting different businesses and handing out physical copies of the invitation to schedule an interview and we will see how it goes.

➡ **EL CENTRAL** from page 4

think it's right, and I think we should stand up for what's right, and everybody should be civil and have their rights, you know?"

Ava: I've seen a lot of just plain discrimination. Like Layla said, many kids have been taken away by ICE. That one case with a five-year-old kid, he was taken by ICE. Yes. One of our teachers at Western, her boyfriend was also taken away by ICE. And ICE has just disregarded the law. They don't even have to hardly go to training. It's just horrible what they have done to our friends and the citizens of Detroit. It seems like it's just for their amusement.

Elaina: Yes. I just think it's just very cruel ... it's not right at all. And I just think by taking steps like these [today's school walk out] in our community, even little ones like these, it helps make things like this come together and push through it, even at hard times when it seems like there's no faith, like everybody getting taken, the kids, the babies. Even little steps like these, they get us through the day and we fight for our people and we stand up for what's right, and that's the thing.

Ava concluded, "Nobody's illegal on stolen land. Little stuff like this does a lot. It changes a lot. No matter how long it takes, it'll help."

Detroit is so fortunate to have EL CENTRAL reporting on the issues that matter to the community.

community **EVENTS**

2026 INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVALYPSILANTI
April 16-18. Riverside Arts Center, 76 N Huron St.Ypsilanti. *Offbeat screenings showcasing local creators and filmmakers from around the world. Times subject to change; for up-to-date schedule and details, see* iffypsi.com. *Tickets $13 (students and seniors, $10); purchase online in advance or at the door.*

SWAP & DROP
Saturday, April 18, 9-11:30 a.m, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1385 Green Road, Ann Arbor. *Come bring your things that need a new home and take what you'd like! Everything is free. Clean up will begin at 11 a.m. with all left-over items donated to Kiwanis at 11:30. Families, students and neighbors welcome!*

"WHO'S THERE?!" ARB DANCE PERFORMANCE
Saturday, April 18, 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Nichols Arboretum, 1610 Washington Heights, Ann Arbor. *The Department of Dance at the U-M School of Music, Theatre & Dance and Ladina Schaller present "Who's There?!"This site-specific senior dance project consists of a walk through the Arb, along which the audience encounters a variety of characters, sights, sounds and scenes. The concert is around one hour long. Audience members are required to walk along Arboretum paths for the duration of the performance and are encouraged to dress for the weather and wear good shoes. This event is family-friendly and appropriate for all ages. Attendance is free, but RSVP is encouraged at this link:* tinyurl.com/yhr62hj8

EARTH WEEK: COMMUNITY COMMONS INITIATING COMMITTEE
April 19-25, 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. Center of the City Commons, Fifth Ave at Library Lane, Ann Arbor. *Weeklong celebration of the Earth. April 19, opening assembly (10 a.m.-noon), followed by a bike ride to the Leslie Nature Center (11:30 a.m.) where there will be an Earth Day Celebration. Concert (5-9 p.m.) with 70s funk sextet the Steve Somers Band, folk ensemble Mary and the Huz Band and others. April 20-24, "Conscious Cafe" (10 a.m.-noon), open discussion and various activities until 9 p.m. April 25, "Conscious Cafe" conclusions (10 a.m.), live music and closing panel (2 p.m.) and talks (6 p.m.).* *See page 8.*

REVOLUTIONARY FOOD GATHERING
Tuesday, April 21, 5-7 p.m. Solidarity Hall, 169 N Washington St., Ypsilanti. *Potluck and discussion to discover who we are in relationship to our food, the earth and each other. Hosted by Groundcover News and Purslane Commons.*

FLIP THE SCRIPT POETRY WORKSHOP
Friday, April 24, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Ann Arbor District Library downtown, 4th floor. *All invited to create a poem based on a personal narrative.*

ELECTRONICS COLLECTION REGISTRATION OPEN
Saturday, April 25, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Ann Arbor Community Reformed Church, 1717 Broadway Street. *Have electronics that you want to dispose of with confidence that they are being sent to sustainable and ethical facilities for refurbishing or recycling? Reserve your spot now at osi.a2gov.org/april25electronics. For more information and additional events, visit* a2gov.org/electronics

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE WHO WERE IN PITTSFIELD
Sunday, April 26, 2 p.m., StoryPoint Saline, 6230 S. State, Saline. *Talk by Henry Ford Museum curator and historian Heather Bruegl, a citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin.*

A2ZERO COMMUNITY COOKBOOK: SUSTAINABILITY FORUM
Tuesday, April 28, 6-7:30 p.m, AADL downtown. *City staff and contributors to this newly released cookbook discuss sustainable food practices.* a2gov.org/sustainabilty

CLASSICAL CREATIONS: WASHTENAW COMMUNITY CONCERT BAND
Thursday, April 30, 7:30 p.m, WCC Towsley Auditorium, 4800 Huron River Drive. *Conductor and Music Director J. Nick Smith and the WCCB present a classical music-themed concert that celebrates both the history and future of this thing we call BAND.*

Submit an event to be featured in the next edition:
submissions@groundcovernews.com

Does the Michigan 10-cent Bottle Deposit Law need changing?

ARAV BHATIA
U-M student contributor

The state of Michigan is unique due to its implementation of the 10-cent bottle deposit law in 1976. Several states have a bottle deposit law where a bottle can be returned for five cents. Michigan is one of three states that gives 10 cents in exchange for each can. This does mean that each can cost 10 extra cents, however, that money is refundable when returned, in order to reduce waste and litter.

In theory, this law helps the environment and also provides a source of income for those in need of extra cash without formal employment. According to the official government of Michigan website, no government ID or paperwork is needed to return the cans, making it an accessible option for unhoused individuals. While the money earned is far from enough to make a living, the law provides some sort of economic relief by performing an action that directly benefits the community and the environment.

The law dictates that cans must be clear, unbroken, and marked as eligible for can returns (which most are). The cans are then scanned by a reverse vending machine, and the can returner gets paid for what they deposit. The acceptors of the cans must refund up to $25 worth, but do not have to exceed that amount. Additionally, it is important to note that only bottles or cans sold in a state with bottle deposits will be marked for eligibility and can be returned in Michigan.

Data from the official Treasury website of the state of Michigan shows the trends of the bottle deposit law. In 2010-2014, the law showed high efficiency. Efficiency in this context is defined by the redemption rates of the deposits. During the early 2010s, redemption rates were 94-96%. This era was proof that the system could work and that consumers are willing to do the extra work to get money back and reduce recycling. In the following years leading up to 2020, the rate slowly began to decline, dropping to around 85%.

This first drop in efficiency can be attributed to several factors, one being the challenges of finding a machine. The time spent collecting the bottles and returning them may not be worth the value of the returns. As economic inflation continues, finding 250 returnable cans and transporting them to a return center for a maximum of $25 seems unfair for the energy required. Greater access to curbside recycling and the declining value of a dime due to inflation also decreased people's motivation to return their own cans.

The COVID pandemic in 2020 marked the largest falloff of efficiency rates. As stores and return machines were shut down, the rate dropped to around 70%. The decrease in return accessibility correlated to a direct drop in the redemption rates. Up until 2024, the redemption rate has hovered around the 70-75% range.

What can be learned from the pandemic years is that the system works best when it is convenient to return. To bring the redemption rates to the early 2010 era rates, accessibility needs to be improved. Especially when trying to benefit the unhoused population, making return centers and machines limited and far apart makes participating in the law very challenging without a car. More machines are the first step to reversing the decline in redemption rates caused by COVID.

Another argument being made is to increase the price of the deposit from 10 cents. This would have downsides as the price of each can of the beverages sold would increase, yet it would also increase the incentive to return cans. People do not have to transport as many cans to earn enough money for basic necessities. The law has been proven to work in the 21st century, yet changes have to be made to ensure the law remains relevant in the quickly changing society.

Pinball Pete's comes to the heart of Ann Arbor

TERRI DEMAR
Groundcover vendor No. 322

The Arnold brothers first started their arcade business in East Lansing. They took over a donut shop which happened to have an elephant on top of the roof. One night while staying up late, the brothers were joking around and painted the elephant bright pink. Ted Arnold, the owner of Pinball Pete's, asked his mom to make a papier-mâché cowboy to sit on the elephant. They decided to call the arcade "Pinball Pete's" and it went off from there.

After success in East Lansing, Arnold expanded to Ann Arbor, with an arcade on William, then Packard (both now closed) and the store we all knew and loved on South University. When asked about his reason to move to Ann Arbor, Arnold reminisced about visiting all the used record stores in high school; "Ann Arbor was a cool town."

In 2025, after more than three decades, the South U location closed. With 13 years still on the lease, they had to move out of the building because Landmark Property management (based out of Georgia) purchased the building with plans to redevelop the lot for luxury student housing. Landmark Property owns and operates five off-campus high-rise complexes, totalling more than 1,500 units, in the city of Ann Arbor.

There was a public hearing at the downtown Ann Arbor District Library on December 5, 2023, and Landmark showed up and saw lots of people who were opposed to their takeover. Many people in Ann Arbor have met their husbands, wives and best friends — what have you — at Pinball Pete's, so clearly this was an important place to townies and Ann Arborites (yes, there's a difference). For example, Arnold was recently invited to a wedding because the marrying couple had their first kiss, first date, and got engaged at Pinball Pete's. So many people have had positive experiences there.

Landmark was in shock. Eventually they paid for the sprinkler system after Pinball Pete's found a new place with the help of Scot Greig, the owner of Bill's Beer Garden and other downtown properties. Arnold shared with us that Greg called him personally to invite him to rent one of his spaces, the old Douglas J. Salon on Liberty Street that had been vacant for many months. Arnold has a little less space now in the new building at 500 Liberty St. because they had to install elevators, bathrooms with changing tables and a drinking fountain.

But, location means everything. It's going to be the new entertainment district with all neon signs, from Scorekeeper's to Knight's Inn to Pinball Pete's. This district started because the area already had neon lights at the Michigan Theater and State Theater.

All of this was meant to be; everything fell into place.

Groundcover News publisher Lindsay Calka and I walked around to see the customers who thrive on Pinball Pete's. We saw that there are many pinball machines, a Jurassic Park game and Dance Dance Revolution downstairs. On the main floor they have air hockey, Space Invaders, mini basketball and more. Also they have a game where you win money, not just tickets.

In conclusion, Pinball Pete's is now in the heart of Ann Arbor where it should be. So it's not just about nostalgia, it's an invitation to come and see Pinball Pete's, make memories, and establish a new generation of game players. Arnold may have to take out another 20-year lease because it looks very promising, and the future is as bright as their neon signs.

Top: **Ted Arnold, owner of Pinball Pete's (left) with Terri Demar (right) at the relocated arcade, which "soft-opened" March 13, 2026.**

Left: **Demar tries out the Jurassic Park game.** Right: **Pinball Pete's still offers old-style games, such as Donkey Kong and Pac-Man.**

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The first Earth Day ever was in Ann Arbor on March 22, 1970 – since then it has spread around the world. This is the 13th Annual Earth Day Program in the Center of the City by the A2 Community Commons Initiating Committee.
EARTH DAY 2026
AT THE ANN ARBOR COMMUNITY COMMONS
Sun, April 19 + Wed, April 22
10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Teach-ins on the crises of the life system, Indigenous perspectives on sustainability, "Conscious Cafe" dialogs on difficult questions, and special activities like a Sunday Bike-a-Thon to the Leslie Science Center Earth Day noon program. There will be music, dance and art performances sets throughout!

DIRECTED BY KAMERON DONALD
Premiere of the feature documentary
THE ROAD HOME
ADDRESSING HOUSING INSECURITIES AND HOMELESSNESS IN WASHTENAW COUNTY
APRIL 23, 2026 6PM
MAY 7, 2026 6PM
Michigan Theater
Ann Arbor, MI
The Road Home is a documentary exploring mental health, housing insecurity, and homelessness in Washtenaw County, highlighting community efforts and challenges.
Watch trailer: bit.ly/watchTrailer2
Local organizations face fragmented responses, funding cuts and limiting support. The film's goal is to unite stakeholders, raise awareness, and inspire collective action to ensure compassionate, sustainable solutions.
Reserve your free seat at the Michigan Theater with the QR code
Additional screenings will take place throughout Washtenaw County.
PRODUCED BY ANN ARBOR HOUSING COMMISSION & BREYKO | DIRECTED BY KAMERON DONALD | CREATIVE DIRECTOR BETHANY COX | PRODUCER ZENAB LABARAN | GAFFER LORENZO TRIPP | EDITED BY KAMERON DONALD | A BREYKO FILM

How to win a general strike

KEN PARKS
Groundcover vendor No. 490

I wrote "Preparing For a General Strike " in the February 20 edition of Groundcover News. That sets the context for this article. The No Kings Rally was a big inspiration for me to think about what we need to do, that protests are not enough and that we need a deeper discussion about what we can do.

By understanding this precious human birth and our sacred labor power, we can apply that awareness in our life. Mind training is an essential activity to prepare ourselves to face reality. As we develop our awareness we will discover the all-good expanse of primordial purity, which to me is the basis of underlying reality. Of course this is a faith assumption and needs to be tested in everyday life. By exploring the middle path which avoids the extremes of eternalism and nihilism we will become at home with our own mind. Eventually, natural mind will arise. And we will learn to appreciate all teachers who can point the way. In the belief that reality is a workable situation, our life becomes more interesting as we experience the interrelatedness of the parts to the whole and drop the ignorance of dualism, especially the dichotomy of self and other. It's a simple philosophy but not at all in compliance with the dominant culture of capitalism. We are all socialized into habitual patterns that support the supremacism of the bourgeoisie and their monopoly on violence.

Our labor power is seamlessly connected to the all-good expanse. This primordial reality is in fact our birthright, our fully awakened mind which is often hidden behind a veil of ignorance, usually an ego formation that fixates on self and other. This illusion is the world of compliance and bureaucracy that demands all your time. This mental slavery must be dissolved into the all-good expanse in order to be at home with our true nature, a fully awakened mind as Buddha, Jesus and all enlightened beings demonstrate.

The elders at Standing Rock were holding this tradition. You will get a feel for this at any powwow. "We are still here" is an indigenous expression based on a community of love and our natural connection to reality. Read my "Powwow Origins" in the March 20 Groundcover News. Take note of James Vukelich Kaagegaabaw who brings world traditions into our life in a good way. At the recent powwow, I learned that the American Indian Unlimited organization is the mother of the Native American Student Association and the U-M-related powwows.

Our preparation will continue even as we engage in a general strike. We are learning that mass protests may be important but by themselves will not bring peace because the war machine ignores and belittles them. We go back to everyday life, which feeds the war machine.

When we are prepared to engage in a deeper level of struggle, we will focus on bringing our work to build the world we want to live in and to strike as we simultaneously do the work that needs to be done to make the strike successful.

The 1937 Flint sit-down strike is an outstanding example of this. The community went to work to support the workers who occupied the factories. Michigan's legacy of musical genius includes Bill Meyer, the well known jazz musician who wrote an opera on this strike called "Forgotten." His talents as a producer and director brought it to stage as an exceptional expression of working class culture. Now is a good time to revisit and promote this opera and learn about winning a general strike.

I once was an activist supporting the American Serviceman's Union, a drive to organize the military rank and file into a union. Search that! During the Vietnam war, peace activists visited coffee shops near military bases for some good networking. Can we restart the American Serviceman's Union?

We can advance our work as a working class by applying Fidel Castro's advice "analizar y meditar."

Working with candidates and elected officials is an important front, especially as people begin to look for real solutions. The No Kings rallies are a good sign of a shift in public opinion. The campaign of Yousef Rabhi for Mayor of Ann Arbor is an expression of this new convergence to put people before profits. Let us work together in all the small ways that add up to a big difference. The future begins now. Take a breath and engage. We will

learn more about the struggle on Earth Day (see page 8).

Want to lower the cost of your energy bills?

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One Struggle, One Fight: The link between the struggles for trans rights and Palestinian liberation

JOE KONCZAL
GEO Queer/Trans Caucus

"Fascism is colonialism turned inward." As the crisis of capitalism worsens at home, we have seen this quote permeate discourse on the increasingly violent and chaotic state of American politics. But what does this idiom truly mean? To answer this, we must turn to history.

The concentration camp, whose history is often understood to begin with the genocides carried out by the Nazis, does not have its origins on the European continent. Concentration camps have a long, bloody history in the colonies of every European power: the Spanish in Cuba, the British in South Africa, the Germans in East Africa. Then, the Germans at home.

In a piece of historic irony, surplus khaki uniforms of the German Colonial Police in Africa were bought by the Nazi Party and became the uniforms of their paramilitary branch, commonly known as the Brownshirts. This concept has been termed the "imperial boomerang," the process whereby imperial powers "bring home" the assortment of apparatuses, institutions and techniques developed in their colonies in order to repress dissent in the empire's heartland. The boomerang returned home and colonialism was turned inward when the first concentration camps were built in Germany.

We do not need to look far to see this "imperial boomerang" in action today. Consider the arsenal of oppression used by Israel. The Palestinians in Gaza have been subjected to a brutal genocide for two and a half years now, and the Strip now has the highest number of childhood amputees in the world. The Zionist occupation employs a broad range of sophisticated military and surveillance technologies developed by U.S. and Israeli companies to control the lives of Palestinians under occupation.

Freedom of movement in Gaza is nigh-on impossible and restricted in the West Bank through almost complete elimination, with checkpoints, patrols and artificially-intelligent surveillance that watches, lists and tracks the movements of Palestinians everywhere. In the boundaries of the state of Israel established after the mass ethnic cleansing in 1948, Palestinians are subject to a complex system of legal discrimination which renders them less autonomous, gives them less access to democratic institutions, and levies harsher penalties on them for crimes. In Zionist prisons, particularly those housing prisoners from the West Bank and Gaza, sexual assault, murder and psychological torment are routine.

(In all of these things the University of Michigan plays its own part, acting as a hedge fund for weapons companies like Boeing and Lockheed Martin that supply the Zionists and maintaining holdings of Israeli shekels that directly support the Zionist currency and economy. This is not to mention the weapons technologies it develops in plain sight in its various aerospace labs, nor its academic partnerships with Zionist academic institutions and tech companies. See tahrirxmich.org/research.)

As crises mount at home and abroad — out of control price inflation, rampant unemployment, a prolonged and wildly unpopular imperialist war with Iran on behalf of Israel — the boomerang is returning home, and it's on a collision course with our trans comrades. Technologies of surveillance and the apparatuses of legal repression long used in the global south are now being used in the nationwide Republican "war on gender ideology." Government data and surveillance was used in these past months to revoke the driving licenses of all trans people in Kansas, leaving them unable to drive legally. Similar surveillance undergirds a recent effort in Tennessee to create a public register of all trans citizens.

People are beginning to realize now how the facilities used to house people kidnapped by ICE are not very different from concentration camps. Less people know about the fact that the Trump administration recently made all Federal Prisons into conversion camps. All forms of gender-affirming care have been banned, and trans people will now be subject to conversion therapy, which means taking hormones away from trans prisoners and forcing them to ingest cocktails of mood altering drugs. This will result in disastrous physical and psychological damage: depression, anxiety, insomnia and eventually for those who have undergone certain types of gender-affirming care, a severe loss in bone density and structure, potentially disabling them for life.

The use of these technologies of repression (prisons, legal status, …) in the service of "anti-gender-ideology" fascism is not an end to itself, either. We can see how trans people, who the government paints as dangerous threats to children, the family and almost everything else, are a tool in the arsenal of distractions that allow the ruling classes in this country to maintain the status quo of imperialist foreign policy.

In all their endeavors to "eradicate transgenderism from public life" as one conservative commentator eagerly put it, the administration has found a willing ally in the University of Michigan. At home, the University has worked to isolate its trans students, especially trans women, by apparently banning them from participating in intramural women's sports leagues which play primarily for fun. They did this with no direct public pressure from the U.S. Presidency at all, citing an executive order regarding "keeping men out of women's sports."

It has also begun to dismantle trans healthcare upon its own volition. Even before Robert Kennedy Jr. attempted to institute a nationwide ban on trans youth care by banning Medicaid reimbursements for gender-affirming care, the University of Michigan — via Michigan Medicine — stopped providing gender affirming care to anyone under the age of 19. Now with ICE being authorized to detain people whose gender markers do not match across various documents — birth certificates, passports, visas — the University's history of assistance in detaining and deporting students places trans international workers at outsized risk as well. This policy is unlikely to remain solely on international workers. Eventually, it will be applied to everyone regardless of citizenship, giving ICE carte blanche to terrorize anyone who has transitioned.

The University is on both ends of the boomerang. They helped perfect the technique overseas, and now they have assisted in bringing it home. So how can we fight the genocide at home and the genocide abroad? It is a waste of our time to appeal to the hypothetical "good conscience" of university administrators or politicians. When State Attorney Dana Nessel expresses her outrage at Michigan Medicine, we must remember how she colluded with the University and the FBI on the violent raids that brutalized trans student organizers of the Palestine Solidarity Encampment on the Diag. When some Regent makes sympathetic noises to the plight of our trans comrades we must remember that those same regents allow the University to be run as a hedge fund that directly and indirectly supports the Zionist air force that in June 2025 struck the "trans wing" of Evin Prison in Tehran, killing hundreds of trans women in a heartbeat.

It is no use signing petitions or working within non-profits whose strategies are constrained by funding guidelines; we must organize ourselves and take direct action. We must learn how to access hormone care ourselves, build mutual aid networks independent of our Bosses, and create a coalition capable of escalating a campaign of organized, collective action to force the University to give its trans workers what they are owed: safe working conditions and basic, fundamental, life-saving healthcare. We must force them to cease their genocidal work beside the Trump Administration at home and abroad. The liberation of Palestine and the liberation of our trans comrades is one in the same.

One Struggle! One Fight! Palestine, Trans Rights!

GEO is the University of Michigan Graduate Employees' Organization.

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APRIL 2026 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM
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GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 7:00 PM
ECUMENICAL SERVICE AT KING OF KINGS ELCA
EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 10:00 AM AT BETHLEHEM UCC
Please visit the church website at:
www.bethlehem-ucc.org for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.

Sunday Worship Time
10:00 am In-person and via Live Stream

from the ARCHIVES

15 YEARS OF NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

American disability rights movement: from public policy to advocacy

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is the cornerstone of the basic civil rights protection for individuals with physical and mental disabilities. The 2009 Amendment Act strengthened the non-discrimination component of the Disability Act. Some people had wondered why the Civil Rights Act of 1964 non-discrimination provisions did not include Americans with disabilities. One reason is that society for a long time took for granted the disability rights movement and their constant struggles for respect, acceptance and basic human dignity.

WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 258

Brief history of the American disability rights movement

The disability rights movement has faced generations and centuries of struggle. They have won many court cases, they have triumphed over many obstacles and they have managed to get the support of U.S. Presidents such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. The movement has succeeded in getting several laws passed for the benefit of disabled Americans. But there is no legislative triumph bigger than the Americans with Disabilities Act.

A more detailed explanation about the ADA comes from writer Jennifer Govan of Columbia University. She noted, "The Americans with Disabilities Act is a comprehensive civil rights law that was signed into law on July 26, 1990 by President George H.W. Bush. ADA covers a wide range of mental and physical medical conditions, including those that [are] not necessarily severe or permanent in nature. "

As part of Columbia University's celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Ms. Govan expanded the concept definition of ADA. She wrote, "It requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees, while imposing accessibility requirements in public areas, such as educational institutions, museums, stores, restaurants, governments and other service establishments. Prohibiting discrimination based on disability in a broad spectrum, the ADA was later amended, becoming the ADA Amendment Act, effective January 1, 2009."

We urge our readers who want to get more detailed information on the legislative history of the Americans with Disabilities Act to watch a video titled, "Who are the Heroes? A History of Disability Rights Movement," presented by Barry Whaley of Burton Blatt Institute — a disability law policy center at Syracuse University Law School. The presentation was made at San Diego Law Library on Friday, July 22, 2022, to help celebrate the 32nd anniversary of the ADA. A lot of valuable information was shared with the audience, including a chronology of legislation and events that shaped the disability movement before and after the 1990 ADA. Mr. Whaley said that the first Vocational Rehabilitation Act was passed by Congress in 1917. It was designed for veterans who were returning from World War I. The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1920 extended the benefits and privileges to civilians. Mr. Whaley noted that in 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt became the first U.S. President with an obvious disability.

It was widely assumed that FDR was elected President in 1932 to help end the "Great Depression." However, disability rights advocates said that it was ironic that the disabled President excluded people with disabilities in the largest recovery program of the 1930s, known as the "Works Progress Administration."

Congress passed the Fair Labor Standard Act of 1938. It prohibited child labor and established minimum wage laws. It also established Section 14 (c) which allows employers to pay people with disabilities minimum wages. It also provides sub-minimum wage certificates to employers who choose to pay below the minimum wage. Sadly, Section 14, which still exists today, allows low wages which continue to keep disabled people in lives of poverty.

In 1940, the American Federation of the Physically Handicapped was created. The American Mental Health Federation was created in 1946. Their organizing and mobilizing efforts led to the passage of the National Mental Disability Act of 1946, which was signed by President Harry Truman. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a landmark legislation which was designed to protect racial minorities and women who were often victims of discrimination and prejudice. We have noted earlier that the 1964 law did not include Americans with disabilities.

In 1972, two court cases regarding including people with disabilities in educational classrooms were addressed. They were Mill v. D.C. and Park v. Pennsylvania. Congress passed the 1973 Rehabilitation Act which prohibited discrimination based on disability for Federal government programs and any organization receiving monetary assistance from the Federal government.

In 1975, Congress passed the "Education for All Children with Disability Act," originally known as "Education for All Handicapped Children Act." In 1978, the nation witnessed a widespread protest known as the "ADAPT Bus Crisis." Protesters aimed to shut down bus transit services, especially in Denver, to bring attention to the issues of accessibility for the disabled community. In 1986, Congress passed the "Air Carrier Access Act" which would provide equal access and equality of opportunity for air travel.

In 1988, major headline news in print and TV noted that Mr. I. King Jordan had been appointed the President of Gallaudet University for the hearing impaired. Gallaudet was founded in 1864, and it took more than 100 years for the school to find a leader who was deaf.

In 1999, Title II of the ADA Act was tested in Olmstead v. L.C. The Supreme Court validated the primacy of the ADA. Mr. Whatley described Olmstead as "The most important disability rights case, perhaps, in our lifetime." The High Court has set the precedent for the enforcement of ADA. The most recent congressional action on ADA is the 2017 ADA Education and Reform Act.

Helen Keller and disability rights heroes

PBS Learning Media presented an important story titled, "Advocacy for People with Disabilities — Becoming Helen Keller." Keller was generally concerned about employment discrimination against people with disabilities, especially educated women. She also wanted to help address the issues of blindness in babies due to sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea.

Helen Keller was blind and deaf but was educated. She became an advocate for job opportunities for women with disabilities who wanted to work in Massachusetts. With the help of friend Charlie Campbell, she appealed to the Massachusetts legislature to expand the civil rights of the blind and to help find employment for the blind. In Helen Keller's time, more than 100 years ago, women were not allowed to talk about sex or venereal diseases (STDs). A cure was finally found for blindness in babies due to sexually transmitted diseases — a few drops of Silver Nitrate into the eyes of newly-born babies.

Keller was gratified when she visited the Children's Hospital in Boston's Nursery Ward and found that there were very few babies in the crib who were considered blind. She said, "I think it was the happiest day of my life when I was told that the Day Nursery in Boston — once full — was then

see **RIGHTS** next page ➡

Disabilty Revolution Club at EMU

PRIYA KOTHARI
Groundcover contributor

Liz Shall

Willamina Churchill-Torres

Alyse David

Spencer Lyke

Eastern Michigan University offers a variety of clubs. These range from academic clubs to organizations like the dance team. Student clubs help bring students with similar interests together to create friendships and create communities. This includes students with disabilities.

During the 2024 school year, the Disability Revolution Club was created by EMU students Willamina Churchill-Torres and Autumn Persinger. As noted in the club's mission statement, "We are creating the Disability Revolution club to allow a safe space for people with disabilities and disability allies. Our biggest goal is to create a community of people who all believe in disability advocacy. We hope to spread awareness and inclusivity through educational discussions, meetings and social media posts."

To achieve their goal, they have partnered with EMU's Disability Resource Center to highlight accessibility issues on campus. The issues the club highlighted on their Instagram page were that the problem with not shoveling the campus sidewalks was not fully resolved early in the semester.

When getting the club up and running, Torres said, "Autumn and I started the club, and we first kind of looked around to find other officers. Just among the community and our friends, there was a lot. We spent most of the summer between my freshman and sophomore years making a constitution. We had lots of officer meetings throughout that summer. We talked about what we wanted from the club."

Torres also mentioned that she had to complete a lot of paperwork. As stated on EMU's Campus Life website, any student who wants to start a club or organization has to do the following:

(1) Undergo a formal recognition process to become an established RSO on campus. You will be asked to submit the complete application, which will include your organization's constitution and bylaws. (2) A minimum of three members, all in good academic and judicial standing with Eastern Michigan University. (3) An EMU faculty/staff advisor or a graduate assistant is permitted to serve as an advisor of an RSO.

After completing the first few steps of the organization forming process, Torres and Persinger needed a faculty advisor, since their club focused on creating a community for disabled students. They asked Liz Shall, who is the interim director of the Disability Resource Center.

Shall said, "Academic year 2024-2025 was my first year on campus working for the DRC. Willamina came to me in the winter semester of 2024 and said, 'I would really like to start a club for students with disabilities. I really want it to be an opportunity for us to build a community to support people with disabilities.' I said awesome."

As part of her role as a faculty advisor, she meets with Torres once a month to assess the club's needs. Shall also offers leadership support, outside resources for the club, and hosted a speaker series for the club in its first year.

Shall also served as a moderator on a panel for the club back in December 2025. Several of the club members participated in the Flipping The Script Conference. Their panel focused on diversity in the college setting.

When the club first started, membership was slow to grow. Torres said, "At the beginning, most of the meetings were just the officers and Ben, an original member."

She went on to say that membership has increased this year. They created more awareness about the club primarily through social media during disability pride month, through word of mouth, and by having booths at Eagle Fest and Eagle Con.

The club is a place for disabled students to be themselves. One of the many challenges disabled college students face is making friends. People tend not to interact with people with disabilities because they are afraid of saying something that will offend them. Able-bodied people may also feel awkward including them in everyday activities because they believe that they can't do those things.

On this topic, Torres said, "My main goal has also been to create a community because before this club, I never really felt like I had a disabled community on campus. I just didn't know anyone else who was disabled. And then no one really understood what I was going through."

Alyse David, an undergraduate student member of the club, had a similar experience. She said, "I was looking for a community, and I wanted to make friends on campus. Kind of what I was going through, being chronically ill. It made me feel less alone."

Spencer Lyke, a graduate student at EMU, added, "The different clubs have given me opportunities to meet students who I know have similar interests to those of groups like the DRC. The biggest barrier that I find to making friends is, you know, the gamble of people who are ableist. But the DRC is really easy for that, and you've already confirmed that they're not. It was really nice for me to click with another group on campus and have a friend group so quickly."

The club members enjoy spending time together outside of club meetings. Lyke said, "I enjoyed it when a bunch of us went to see 'June on The Moon' together. I enjoyed sharing something I've been working on with the group. And seeing different club members all just enjoy a performance and something that was accessible for everybody."

➡ **RIGHTS** from last page

almost empty."

Keller and a few friends were invited by the highly circulated "Ladies Home Journal" to write articles about how the gonorrhea STD was unknowingly passed from the mom to the baby. Keller and friends were given very tough writing assignments because sex and STDs were considered taboo in 1903.

The Massachusetts Association for the Blind and the Visually Impaired was formed by Helen Keller and Charlie Campbell. Keller expanded her work on disability issues and job opportunities for the blind. She lobbied steadfastly, and the Massachusetts legislature urged the necessity for employment of the blind. Helen Keller said, "It's terrible to be Blind and to be uneducated; but it's worse for the Blind who have finished their education to be idle."

The state legislature accepted Keller's suggestion to form a commission to reduce blindness in babies. She was asked to be a member of the commission. There was no accommodation for Helen's deafness while on the commission, so she brought in her own interpreters. She was not able to acquire all the relevant information she needed while serving in the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. Predictably, she resigned.

Syracuse University legal scholar-Franklin A. Carcamo wrote a March 2020 article in the Syracuse Law Review. The title is "The Past, Present, and Future: ADA and Thirty Years of Progress in Access, Inclusion and Opportunity." There is no doubt about the challenges and successes of the disability rights movement. The people with disabilities and their advocates will be eternally vigilant. The victories are hard-won, and as battle-tested soldiers for freedom, justice and dignity. The movie documentary "Crip Camp" depicts a youth camp described by Barry Whaler as the "epicenter" of the disability rights movement in the 1960s. There have been millions of heroes in the American Disability Movement. Barry Whaley of Syracuse Burton Blatt Institute mentioned the School of Education Dean, Burton Blatt, and disability advocate Fred Kaplan. He also mentioned Ed Roberts of Berkeley, Marc Gold of alternative teaching modules, Fannie Lou Hamer, etc. There are plenty of stories of heroes in every community.

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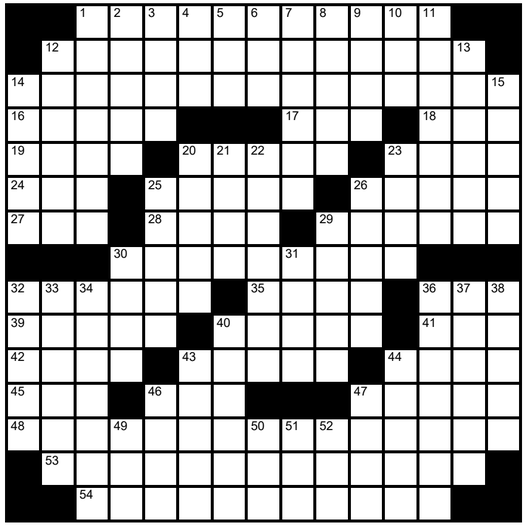
CROSSWORD

International Network of Street Papers

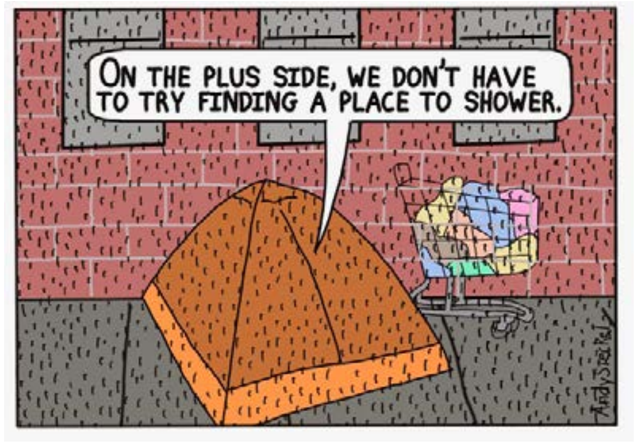


ACROSS

1. Instrument that registers movements of the heart
12. Governments run by many individual experts in their own fields
14. "Let them eat cake" is misattributed to her
16. "Gladiator" setting
17. "What's the ___?"
18. Victorian, for one
19. Alone
20. Kidney deposit
23. "-zoic" things
24. "Do the Right Thing" pizzeria owner
25. For all to hear
26. High up
27. "Star Trek" rank (Abbr.)
28. Stallion, once
29. Puts down
30. Official who investigations complaints against the government
32. Islamic ruler's decrees
35. Auditory
36. Dash lengths
39. 18-wheelers
40. Cousin of a raccoon
41. Police, with "the"
42. Not "fer"
43. Wed
44. Federal law applied against the Mafia
45. ___ Khan
46. Title for some monks
47. Rocket fuel ingredient, for short
48. Cord cutters forgo this to save money
53. Complexity
54. Recklessly wasteful

DOWN

1. Breakfast choices
2. Breezing through
3. Perlman of "Cheers"
4. Letters from your parents?
5. Charged particle
6. Columbus Day mo.
7. Pulverized
8. Bring up
9. Pimples
10. Type of graph or dessert
11. They're straight, slangily
12. Clan plaid
13. Attack by plane
14. Expert pool shot
15. Bridge positions
20. People with poor hygiene
21. Fragrant tree resin
22. In the open air
23. Brio
25. High points
26. Old-timey counters
29. Accord
30. Father of Balder
31. Polaris, for one
32. Sir ___ Newton
33. Jamaican music genre
34. Friendly
36. Snob
37. Computer shortcuts
38. Faint
40. Photo capture device
43. Engine
44. Like dough that's ready to be baked
46. Balance sheet item
47. "A Postcard to ___" (Jens Lekman song)
49. Calif. airport
50. Head, for short
51. Info available at 49-Down
52. Relax



Sudoku ★★★★☆☆ 4puz.com

	9	1	3	6				
4		6						
3				8		6	5	
					4		7	
1	2		5		6		4	8
	4		7					
	5	3		7				4
						2		6
				9	3	7	1	

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS *April 3, 2026 edition*

1 V	2 E	3 R	4 S	5 E
6 I	M	H	I	P
7 S	A	Y	T	O
8 T	I	M	I	D
9 A	L	E	N	E

Metro SWAT/CNT's room for improvement

MARIE
Groundcover contributor

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and National Policing Institute are actively working to assist law enforcement leaders, mayors and communities to improve the appropriateness, effectiveness and accountability of specialized teams and programming. In 2024, the DOJ published "Considerations for Specialized Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies to Ensure Appropriateness, Effectiveness, and Accountability." This guide may serve as a tool to investigate concerns raised during a 30-hour-scene involving the Washtenaw Metro SWAT's (Special Weapons and Tactics) team, spanning Jan. 4-5, 2026. Much of the community's concern was aimed at how attempts to utilize funded and well-publicized (even advertised) crisis intervention resources devolved into a multijurisdictional, militaristic assault.

The community feels Metro SWAT's response to the crisis was overly aggressive. Law enforcement leadership explained the scene was viewed as a "barricaded incident" involving a suspect armed with a bladed weapon. (Multiple sources stated the weapon was a sword.) SWAT's approach spilled into the street in the form of tear gas, flashbang grenades, guns, snipers, long range acoustic devices (LRADs) and other military grade equipment. The situation devolved further when it ignited images of 1963 Alabama with the use of firehoses, resulted in injuries to bystanders as well as neighbors, and culminated with making an entire building unsafe for human habitation.

After this recent incident in Ypsilanti, law enforcement leaders expressed the opinion that there is room for growth, especially with respect to how SWAT and Crisis Negotiation Teams (CNTs) approach a mental health crisis. However, the goal of law enforcement when approaching situations with people who appear to be armed, is to prevent loss of life. According to non-law enforcement community members, 'the siege' is just another example of negative experiences resulting from attempts to utilize well-funded coordinated responses in the community.

At this time there are multiple overlapping coordinated efforts between law enforcement and Community Mental Health; however it appears there is a need to review and overhaul the current methodology of SWAT, CNT, CMH, Crisis Response Unit, housing resources and other millage expenditures which many regard as wasteful and/or poorly executed.

Regardless of what individual community members' personal opinions may be about law enforcement, January's experience with Metro SWAT traumatized an entire community. On the one hand, many community members feel SWAT is unnecessary under any circumstances. On the other hand, many community members feel SWAT has a purpose and there is a need for specialized law enforcement teams.

Community members who were present at the incident feel their own presence was necessary, as they felt if they did not remain at the scene, the incident would have ended with a fatality. One neighbor stated, "Honestly I feel this incident could have ended more peacefully if they just let us surround the house while holding hands and singing songs." Another Metro SWAT/CNT incident from 2018 was reportedly resolved using a cup of hot chocolate as a de-escalation tactic.

A neighbor who lives a few blocks from the site of 'the siege' explained they were present at the perimeter maintained by the Ypsilanti Police Department (YPD) a few times over the course of the incident. This neighbor reported their eyes were impacted by the amount of tear gas in the air. According to the Michigan Legislature website, law enforcement is permitted to utilize two forms of "self-defense spray or foam device." One form is what is commonly referred to as tear gas, and a canister in Michigan is not to contain "more than 35 grams of any combination of orthochlorobenzalmalononitrile and inert ingredients." The second is commonly referred to as pepper spray and is "a solution containing not more than 18% oleoresin capsicum."

According to a 2023 NIH National Library of Medicine article, titled Tear Gas and Pepper Spray Toxicity, by Tidwell and Wills, tear gas and pepper spray "describe a group of agents used to subdue combative persons in a non-lethal manner." The Tidwell and Wills article states that, "While the use of lacrimator agents have been banned in warfare for many years, they are still in use by law enforcement and civilians for personal protection."

These agents are known to cause coughing, breathing problems, chest pain, headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, loss of consciousness, blindness, skin rashes or blistering, liver and kidney damage and death. The severity of symptoms depends on a person's pre-existing medical conditions, may be long-lasting or may take time to fully manifest, and worsens in poorly ventilated areas and after repeated exposures. According to a New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet printed in August 2000, there are workplace exposure limits on tear gas, and contact with skin may result in overexposure.

During a Washtenaw Board of Commissioners meeting on Jan. 7, neighbors and witnesses shared their traumatic experiences, which included prolonged exposure to sound from the LRAD. According to an Oct. 27, 2020 article on phr.org (Physicians for Human Rights), titled "Health Impacts of Crowd-Control Weapons: Acoustic Weapons," LRADs have the ability to cause pain, nausea, tinnitus and even hearing loss, especially at close range, over extended periods of time, or at the hands of abusive or inexperienced operators. According to the PHR article, "International human rights principles have been violated if the use of less than lethal incapacitating weapons is not adequately regulated, or if the weapons are used in an indiscriminate manner."

According to a 2021 article by Lethal in Disguise, called "Court limits LRAD use," by the New York Police Department, a NYPD settlement, which followed injuries to Black Lives Matter protesters and journalists in 2014, included changes to policy regarding the use of LRADs and modified LRAD training. The NYPD now prohibits the use of "the painfully loud and high-pitched 'deterrent' or 'alert' tone, though they may make voice announcements on the devices."

Several community members, neighbors and bystanders expressed concerns about the use of numerous flashbang grenades. During an NPR All Things Considered broadcast, titled "Investigation Reveals Rampant Use Of Flashbang Grenades By Police," which aired Jan. 18, 2015, flashbangs are "A type of hand grenade used by the police and the military, but instead of shooting out deadly shrapnel, like a standard grenade, most of the flashbang's explosive energy creates a blinding flash and a deafening boom." The research presented during this broadcast described serious injuries up to death to law enforcement utilizing the devices, as well as to people inside dwellings where flashbangs are utilized. In one example, a flashbang landed in a portable crib causing the baby's nose to be blown off, damage to the mouth and chest cavity, requiring eight reconstructive surgeries. In this NPR example, the flashbangs were utilized during a drug raid where no drugs were reportedly found, and the suspect in question did not live at the address.

In another article available at pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39624812/, from Dec. 2014, written by Patel and Echeverri, a "U.S. Army soldier sustained a left chest wall and shoulder blast injury with significant soft tissue damage, volumetric pectoralis major muscle loss, mild sensory nerve damage, and third-degree burns from a flashbang grenade." The soldier required surgical intervention, pain management and physical therapy.

The article reports the soldier had "a successful recovery with restored mobility and chest wall stability." The article also states, "This case highlights the challenges of treating severe chest wall trauma with burns, emphasizing the importance of timely surgical intervention and a multidisciplinary approach."

Another less-than-lethal tool utilized during the incident in Ypsilanti was the Rook. The website for the Rook manufacturer Ring Power Corporation states there are four attachments that come standard: the armored deployment platform, hydraulic breaching ram, grapple claw and vehicle extraction tool. According to the website, the breaching ram is equipped with five infrared cameras which transmit to the inside of the Rook's cab and can also be transmitted to the command center.

According to an ABC13 Houston Aug. 25, 2023, interview with a SWAT lieutenant in Houston, the Rook is an armored vehicle generally used in situations involving dangerous and armed suspects. "This is usually reserved for when we have violent suspects inside, or something like that, who are refusing to come out peacefully." According to the lieutenant, using the Rook supports the national preservation of life guideline "Property can be replaced, human lives can not."

According to a Washtenaw County law enforcement leader, Metro SWAT and CNT have operational commanders who report to the incident command on scene, which is the police agency's senior officer requesting SWAT. For the recent Ypsilanti incident, YPD had the operational authority, as they were the jurisdiction where the incident occurred.

"In Washtenaw County, CNT was created to ensure mental health experts from CMH were involved, given that barricaded incidents involving weapons typically have a mental health component. CNT will try negotiating first before escalating to SWAT whenever possible. The teams are a mutual resource for all police agencies in Washtenaw. If the teams need

see **SWAT** page 16 ➡

White chocolate macadamia cookies

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

Ingredients:
1 cup butter, softened
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
1 1/2 tsp vanilla
3 cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
2 cups white chocolate chips
1 1/2 cups Macadamia nuts, chopped

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Cream together butter and sugars until combined; be sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the vanilla and then the eggs one at a time and mix until combined.

In a separate bowl mix the flour, salt and baking soda. One cup at a time, add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and mix well. Fold in white chips and nuts.

Scoop 1 to 2 tablespoons of dough onto parchment-covered cookie sheet (make sure they are uniform in size). Bake for 10-12 minutes, until they are just beginning to brown.

Remove from the oven and leave on the cookie sheet for 5 to 10 minutes. When totally cooled, store in an air-tight container. So good!

➡ **SWAT** from page 15

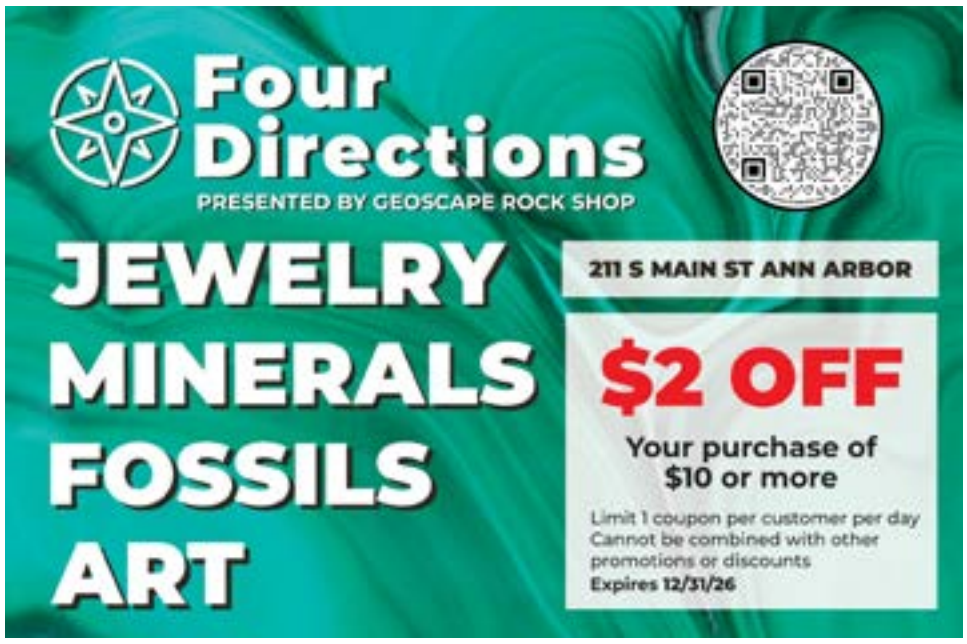
added assistance, sometimes other agencies from neighboring areas also assist, as well as MSP [Michigan State Police]. This typically happens when a barricaded scene lasts multiple days as shift rotations have to occur and people need to sleep."

In 2023 the DOJ and National Policing Institute gathered in the wake of recent deaths and several corruption cases involving specialized enforcement units across the country. In 2024, the above-mentioned guide ("Considerations for Specialized Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies to Ensure Appropriateness, Effectiveness, and Accountability") was published by the DOJ. The guide was created with input from law enforcement, the community, academic institutions and advocacy organizations across the country. The guide is understood to not currently be the standard for specialized police units, and is currently described as just considerations "for the development of policies and practices to encourage evaluation, monitoring and oversight of specialized units within policing."

However, the guide was written with the purpose of addressing concerns surrounding how specialized units "... have at times run afoul of law enforcement's mission and of the Constitution. These instances of police misconduct can destroy the legitimacy of their own and other agencies and severely undermine community and officer safety."

At this time it appears the guide may be a useful tool to enhance the investigation into the events surrounding 'the siege,' and a separate incident where several deputies were involved in a fatal shooting a few hours later. Both incidents occurred in the Ypsilanti community. At this time, people in touch with the person who was carried from the home in Ypsilanti report he is facing several charges, required extensive medical treatment and was linked to available supportive resources.

According to Washtenaw County Sheriff Alyshia Dyer, "The city of Ypsilanti is going to pursue an independent review and since the incident is under jurisdiction of Ypsilanti Police, we will need to wait for the independent review to be completed before I can do any type of public forum. I did review everything I have access to and protocols were followed; there are some areas I think could have been improved though regardless. If Ypsilanti doesn't do an independent review, then I'll be free to start planning the public review meeting in partnership with the Chief."



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